United Nations CEDAW/C/SUR/CO/4-6

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Concluding observations on the combined fourth to sixth periodic reports of Suriname*

1. The Committee considered the combined fourth to sixth periodic reports of Suriname (CEDAW/C/SUR/4-6) at its 1584th and 1585th meetings (see CEDAW/C/SR.1584 and 1585) held on 28 February 2018. The Committee's list of issues and questions is contained in CEDAW/C/SUR/Q/4-6 and the responses of Suriname are contained in CEDAW/C/SUR/Q/4-6/Add.1.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates the submission by the State party of its combined fourth to sixth periodic reports but regrets the eight-year delay. It also appreciates the State party's written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group and welcomes the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the dialogue. The Committee regrets, however, that the delegation was not able to provide answers to many of the questions raised and that some of the answers provided were not sufficiently clear or precise.

3. The Committee notes with appreciation the multisectoral delegation of the State party, which was headed by Policy Adviser at the Ministry of Home Affairs, Mohamed Nasier Eskak, and included representatives of the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and Police and the Ministry of Health, four of whom took part in the dialogue by video teleconference from Paramaribo. The Committee strongly regrets, however, the lack of high-level participation by the State party in the dialogue with the Committee.

B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since the consideration in 2007 of the State party's third periodic report (CEDAW/C/SUR/3) in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of the following:

* Adopted by the Committee at its sixty-ninth session (19 February–9 March 2018).

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(a) Laws amending the Penal Code by defining discrimination and including sexual orientation and gender identity as prohibited grounds of discrimination; prohibiting and expanding the definition of trafficking; criminalizing marital rape, obstetric violence, and battery and assault leading to death (femicide); and, in 2015 and 2009, removing restrictions on access by adolescents to sexual information and contraceptives;

(b) Amendment to the Law of 1975 on Regulation of the Surinamese Nationality and Residency, 2014, removing discriminatory provisions regarding the acquisition and loss of nationality in the context of marriage and divorce;

(c) National Pension Benefits Act, Minimum Hour Wage Act and National Basic Health Insurance Act, 2014, establishing a national social security system, which promote women's economic empowerment, in particular female heads of households, and increase their access to health care;

(d) Law on Stalking, 2012, prohibiting stalking and allowing for preventive measures to be taken by the public prosecutor to protect possible victims;

(e) Law on Combating Domestic Violence, 2009, containing penal provisions and defining domestic violence and granting victims of domestic violence the ability to request restraining orders.

5. The Committee welcomes the State party's efforts to improve its institutional and policy framework aimed at accelerating the elimination of discrimination against women and promoting gender equality, such as the adoption or establishment of the following:

(a) National development plan, 2017–2021, which requires all projects developed by the Government to include a component for mainstreaming a gender perspective;

(b) National strategy and national plan of action to combat trafficking in persons, 2014, which includes strategies for reaching out to women and children from rural areas;

(c) Gender work plan, 2013, which is focused on improving the situation of women with regard to decision-making, education, health, labour, income and poverty and violence;

(d) National Steering Committee on Domestic Violence, 2008, and the National Platform on Domestic Violence, 2010.

6. The Committee welcomes the fact that, in the period since the consideration of the previous report, the State party has ratified or acceded to the following international instruments:

(a) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in 2017;

(b) Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, in 2012;

(c) United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto, in 2007.

C. Parliament

7. **The Committee stresses the crucial role of the legislative power in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention (see the statement by the Committee on its relationship with parliamentarians, adopted at the forty-fifth session, in 2010). It invites the National Assembly, in line with its mandate, to take the necessary steps regarding the implementation of the present concluding observations between now and the submission of the next periodic report.**

D. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

Visibility of the Convention

8. The Committee notes that the Convention, after its ratification, has been incorporated into national law under article 106 of the Constitution. However, the Committee is concerned about the limited application of the provisions of the Convention in practice and that there are no cases in which the Convention has been directly invoked before national courts. It further regrets the lack of awareness among policymakers of the importance of women's rights and gender equality.

9. **The Committee recommends that the State party provide capacity-building to judges, prosecutors and lawyers on the Convention, its direct applicability and the concept of substantive equality. It further recommends that the State party enhance its efforts to raise awareness among women of the significance of the human rights of women, gender equality and discrimination on the basis of sex, targeting in particular rural women, Maroon women and indigenous women.**

Legislative framework and definition of discrimination

10. The Committee recognizes the diversity of cultures and ethnicities in the State party and its distinct indigenous and tribal populations. While noting the position of the State party that article 8 of its Constitution sufficiently guarantees the substantive equality of women and men, the Committee is concerned that neither the Constitution nor national legislation includes a definition of discrimination against women, in accordance with article 1 of the Convention, covering direct and indirect discrimination in both the public and private spheres and recognizing intersecting forms of discrimination. It also remains concerned that disadvantaged groups of women, including rural women, Maroon women and indigenous women, women with disabilities, lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and intersex persons, continue to experience intersecting forms of discrimination and violations of their human rights. It further regrets the lack of political will on the part of policymakers to adopt, as a matter of priority, legal provisions to protect women's rights, and notes that provisions such as the draft law on equal treatment of men and women and the draft labour law and provisions on the establishment of a complaints mechanism on gender-based discrimination have been pending since 2002.

11. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt the draft law on the establishment of an independent constitutional court with the power to review the conformity of legislative acts with international human rights treaties and staff it with qualified personnel;**

(b) **Amend article 8 (2) of the Constitution to recognize intersecting forms of discrimination against rural women, Maroon women and indigenous women,**

women with disabilities, lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and intersex persons;

(c) **Adopt the draft law on the equal treatment of women and men and ensure that it includes a definition of discrimination against women, including intersecting forms of discrimination, and prohibits direct and indirect discrimination in the public and private spheres, in line with article 1 of the Convention and the Committee's previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/SUR/CO/3, para. 12);**

(d) **Conduct, within the next 24 months, mandatory capacity-building for parliamentarians, policymakers and government officials on the importance of comprehensive, consistent and coherent legal reform to achieve substantive equality of women and men, with a view to building consensus for the immediate adoption of the various draft laws and policies for the advancement of women's rights.**

Access to justice

12. The Committee notes that women can obtain free legal aid services through the Legal Aid Bureau (*Bureau Rechtszorg*) of the Ministry of Justice and Police. Nonetheless, it regrets that there is no mechanism, policy or procedure in the State party to guarantee equal access to justice for all women, in particular those belonging to disadvantaged groups. The Committee also notes with concern information about persistent discrimination in the judicial system against indigenous women and tribal women, in particular with regard to their land rights. The Committee is also concerned about the lack of information on the complaints mechanisms available to women who are victims of discrimination and gender-based violence.

13. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Conduct a study on how the Committee's general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice can be used to reform the Legal Aid Bureau and address discriminatory practices impeding women's access to justice in the State party;**

(b) **Establish, without delay, a confidential complaints mechanism for women who are victims of discrimination and gender-based violence;**

(c) **Provide free legal aid to women and girls without sufficient means, adopt gender-sensitive procedures for applications to the Legal Aid Bureau, increase its budget and provide free interpretation services for ethnic minority women.**

National machinery for the advancement of women

14. The Committee notes with appreciation the efforts made by the State party to strengthen the Bureau for Gender Affairs and to provide financial support to non-governmental organizations that work on the promotion of women's rights. However, it notes the following with concern:

(a) Changes have frequently been made to the major government bodies working for gender equality and women's empowerment and the organizational structure of the Bureau for Gender Affairs is still pending approval by the Minister for Home Affairs;

(b) There has been no national policy on gender since the gender work plan, 2013;

(c) The gender mainstreaming management system, established in 2001 to ensure gender mainstreaming in all sectors of the Government, is not fully functional, partly due to a lack of clarity about the responsibilities of the gender focal points, whose job descriptions have been pending approval by the Minister for Home Affairs since 2016 and who have played a weak role in gender policy development in their respective ministries.

15. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Finalize, without delay, the organizational structure of the Bureau for Gender Affairs and ensure that it has adequate decision-making power and human, technical and financial resources to effectively promote the advancement of women's rights and gender equality in the State party;**

(b) **Accelerate the formulation and adoption of the national gender policy plan, 2018–2021, through specific and measurable targets and indicators;**

(c) **Establish, within the Bureau for Gender Affairs, a monitoring mechanism to assess the implementation of the national gender policy plan comprehensively and on a regular basis;**

(d) **Establish and apply gender mainstreaming in the development and implementation of all laws, policies and programmes in all ministries and legislative structures;**

(e) **Put in place a mechanism, on a permanent basis, to monitor the implementation of the Convention and address obstacles to the adoption of relevant legislation;**

(f) **Approve, without delay, the job descriptions of gender focal points, assign that function to senior-level staff and ensure that they have direct access to policymakers and to the Bureau for Gender Affairs, in line with the Committee's previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/SUR/CO/3, para. 24).**

National human rights institution

16. The Committee welcomes the establishment of the National Human Rights Institute in 2016 but regrets that it is not yet operational.

17. **The Committee calls upon the State party to operationalize the National Human Rights Institute, in compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (Paris Principles) (General Assembly resolution 48/134, annex), with a broad mandate including the promotion and protection of women's rights and gender equality. It also recommends that the State party allocate sufficient human, technical and financial resources to the Institute and that it provide capacity-building for its staff on gender issues and women's rights under the Convention.**

Corruption

18. The Committee welcomes the adoption in 2017 of the Anti-Corruption Act but considers that pervasive corruption in the public sector continues to undermine the advancement of women's human rights in the State party.

19. **The Committee recommends that the State party formulate a government policy on the implementation of the Anti-Corruption Act, strengthen institutional capacities to effectively detect and investigate allegations of corruption in the public sector, prosecute the perpetrators and ensure transparency of the public financial management system in order to prevent resources from being diverted from the implementation of the Convention.**

Extraterritorial obligations

20. The Committee notes with appreciation the efforts made by the State party to address the consequences of mining activities, including pollution from mercury, and to mainstream gender issues during the conduct and monitoring of those activities through its gender action plan. It is concerned, however, about the negative impact of the activities of foreign-owned gold mining, petroleum extraction and agribusiness companies operating within the State party, as well as companies registered in Suriname and carrying out operations abroad, on the rights of rural women, Maroon women and indigenous women. In that regard, it is concerned that the existing legal framework does not hold foreign-owned companies sufficiently accountable for violations of women's rights, in particular their land rights and right to health, and violations of environmental and labour standards.

21. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen its legislation governing the conduct of companies registered in the State party, including the Mining Decree, to establish minimum standards for environmental protection, water quality, labour and health, with a view to protecting the rights of rural women, Maroon women and indigenous women affected or likely to be affected by their operations;**

(b) **Establish a mechanism or body to regulate the activities of foreign-owned private mining companies and monitor their compliance with legislation and the advancement of the human rights of women.**

Temporary special measures

22. The Committee is concerned about the limited understanding of the concept of temporary special measures in the State party, including among political leaders and policymakers. It notes with concern that the State party has not adopted any temporary special measures to achieve substantive equality between women and men in all areas of the Convention in which women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, including political and public life, education, employment and health.

23. **The Committee reiterates its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/SUR/CO/3, para. 26, and A/57/38, para. 56) and recommends that the State party, in line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures:**

(a) **Raise awareness among relevant State officials of the non-discriminatory nature of temporary special measures, in order to achieve the substantive equality of women and men, and the need to eliminate the intersecting forms of discrimination faced by disadvantaged groups of women, especially rural women, Maroon women and indigenous women, as well as women with disabilities;**

(b) **Set time-bound targets and allocate sufficient resources for the implementation of temporary special measures, such as quotas and other**

proactive measures, to accelerate women's equal representation in the judiciary, public service, agricultural cooperatives, trade unions and professional associations and on rural councils and public and private company boards.

Stereotypes

24. The Committee welcomes the training activities conducted by the Ministry of Home Affairs to eliminate discriminatory stereotypes. Nonetheless, the Committee reiterates its previous concerns (CEDAW/C/SUR/CO/3, para. 17) about the persistence of discriminatory stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society. In particular, it is concerned about the following:

(a) The lack of structural, long-term national programmes and strategies to address the lack of public awareness of women's rights and the resulting stereotypes;

(b) The limited measures taken to eliminate discriminatory stereotypes in the education system, including in school curricula and textbooks, as well as the fact that the basic life skills programme, which was introduced in 1997 to adapt the outdated education system to modern standards and contains sections to sensitize students about gender equality, has not been integrated into school curricula and is still referred to as a "pilot project" to be tested in seven schools in 2018–2019;

(c) The absence of regulations governing media content, which often reinforces traditional roles of women and fails to provide a balanced picture of women's diverse roles and contributions to society.

25. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Identify and address barriers to the development of structural, long-term national programmes aimed at changing social and cultural patterns that promote and reinforce discriminatory stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society;**

(b) **Incorporate, within a specific time frame, the basic life skills programme into the education system and ensure that the textbooks developed under the programme are used in all primary and secondary schools;**

(c) **Raise awareness among members of the media of the need to eliminate gender stereotypes and establish a mechanism, within the Bureau for Gender Affairs, for the systematic assessment of stereotypical content in the media that encourages its removal and promotes positive images of women and girls;**

(d) **Develop and implement targeted measures through the media to raise public awareness of women's rights and promote positive images of women as active participants in social, economic and political life and of men as active participants in household and child-rearing responsibilities.**

Gender-based violence against women

26. The Committee reiterates its concern about the high prevalence of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, against women in the State party and the delay in adopting the draft national policy plan on domestic violence, 2014–2017. It further regrets the following:

(a) The limited information on the application of the Law on Combating Domestic Violence since its adoption in 2009;

(b) The lack of information on inter-institutional coordination mechanisms for combating gender-based violence, including domestic violence and sexual harassment, and the fact that there is only one shelter for victims of domestic violence, which provides care for up to 30 women and their children;

(c) The continuing practice of corporal punishment against girls and the absence of legislation explicitly prohibiting it in all settings;

(d) The lack of information on the prevalence, causes and consequences of gender-based violence against women, despite the Committee's previous recommendation (CEDAW/C/SUR/CO/3, para. 20).

27. **Recalling its general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Approve, without delay, the national policy plan on domestic violence and continue its efforts to enforce the Law on Combating Domestic Violence;**

(b) **Establish additional shelters for victims of gender-based violence that are accessible for all women and girls, especially those living in rural areas, and ensure that legal assistance, rehabilitation and psychosocial support is provided to victims there;**

(c) **Adopt legislation to explicitly prohibit corporal punishment in all settings;**

(d) **Systematically collect data on gender-based violence against women and girls, disaggregated by age, ethnicity, geography and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, and ensure that research in that area serves as a basis for comprehensive and targeted interventions.**

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

28. The Committee welcomes the revision of the Penal Code to prohibit trafficking, as well as the establishment of the Trafficking in Persons Desk in the Public Prosecutor's Department, the Trafficking in Persons Unit in the police force to investigate cases of trafficking in persons and the Working Group to Counter Trafficking in Persons within the Ministry of Justice and Police, which is mandated to develop the national strategy and national plan of action. However, it is concerned about the following:

(a) The limited capacity and responsiveness of the institutions created to monitor compliance with anti-trafficking laws, particularly in the interior;

(b) The lack of reliable data on trafficking in women and girls, including on its prevalence and the number of investigations, prosecutions, convictions and sentences imposed on perpetrators;

(c) The lack of information on the shelters available to women and girls who are victims of trafficking and the types of programmes and health services provided by those shelters.

29. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Allocate adequate human, technical and financial resources to the new government infrastructure to combat trafficking in persons (*Schakelketting 2.0*), in order to implement the national strategy and national plan of action to combat**

trafficking in persons, and establish a sufficient number of adequately equipped shelters for victims of trafficking in different parts of the State party;

(b) **Investigate, prosecute and adequately punish perpetrators and ensure that victims of trafficking and prostitution are exempted from criminal liability and provided with adequate protection, remedies and reparations, including temporary residence permits, medical care, psychosocial counselling, rehabilitation and reintegration support and compensation;**

(c) **Adopt a policy to ensure that victims of trafficking in need of protection have access to asylum procedures in the State party and that gender-sensitive identification and referral mechanisms are in place at points of entry and in detention facilities;**

(d) **Continue to carry out capacity-building for judges, prosecutors, border police, immigration authorities and other law enforcement officers on early identification and gender-sensitive protocols for dealing with victims of trafficking.**

Participation in political and public life

30. The Committee notes with appreciation the efforts of the State party to promote women's political participation, as well as the slight increase in the participation of women in political life at the district and local levels and in the diplomatic service. Nonetheless, the Committee reiterates its previous concern (CEDAW/C/SUR/CO/3, para. 25) about the significant underrepresentation of women in political and public life, in particular in decision-making positions, including in the National Assembly and the Council of Ministers.

31. **Recalling that the full, equal, free and democratic participation of women on an equal basis with men in political and public life is a requirement for the full realization of the human rights of women, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt a comprehensive strategy to promote the participation of women in political and public life at all levels, including through the adoption of statutory quotas for political appointments, the accelerated recruitment of women to decision-making positions and offering financial incentives for political parties that include an equal number of women and men in their electoral lists;**

(b) **Promote definitive support for women who stand for election and their political campaigns for election through awareness-raising measures among political leaders and the general public, capacity-building and campaign financing;**

(c) **Introduce temporary special measures to increase the representation of rural women, Maroon women and indigenous women in the National Assembly, the Council of Ministers, legislative bodies, district and local councils, leadership positions in political parties and on government advisory councils (High Organs of State).**

Nationality

32. The Committee welcomes the 2014 amendment of the Law of 1975 for the Regulation of the Surinamese Nationality and Residency, which aims to promote gender equality in the transfer of nationality and introduce safeguards to prevent

statelessness. Nonetheless, the Committee is concerned that women living in the interior face difficulties registering the birth of their children.

33. **Recalling article 9 of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 32 (2014) on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Take legislative and other measures, such as deploying mobile units of the civil registrar and reducing costs and administrative barriers, to facilitate birth registration for children born in the interior;**

(b) **Remove any administrative barriers and discriminatory practices that prevent the registration of children born to foreign parents.**

Education

34. The Committee welcomes the efforts of the State party to improve women's and girls' access to education, including by removing entrance fees and improving accessibility for girls with disabilities. It also notes the high net enrolment rate of girls in primary education and the high representation of girls in higher education. However, the Committee remains concerned about the following:

(a) The low completion rates at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education among women and girls, as reported by the State party in paragraph 110 of its report (CEDAW/C/SUR/4-6);

(b) Limited access for girls from disadvantaged groups, including girls with disabilities, and significant disparities in enrolment rates between rural and urban areas, as well as the poor quality of elementary schools and the lack of secondary schools in rural areas;

(c) The lack of bilingual education for both Maroon and indigenous girls and boys;

(d) High drop-out rates, and even expulsion rates, due to early pregnancy, and the tendency among young mothers to pursue vocational training instead of returning to school;

(e) The lack of mandatory, comprehensive and age-appropriate education in schools on sexual and reproductive health and rights;

(f) The period of compulsory education being only up to 12 years of age.

35. **In line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 36 (2017) on the right of girls and women to education, and recalling its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/SUR/CO/3, para. 18), the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Increase enrolment rates among women and girls at all levels of education, giving due consideration to the relationship between women's and girls' educational choices and labour market demands;**

(b) **Improve the quality and accessibility of schools in rural areas and provide instruction in indigenous and tribal languages in schools, with a view to improving access to education for Maroon girls, indigenous girls and girls with disabilities;**

(c) **Establish oversight mechanisms, as well as sanctions, to enforce government policies prohibiting the expulsion of pregnant girls from school and to facilitate the reintegration of young mothers into the school system;**

(d) **Institutionalize mandatory, age-appropriate and comprehensive sexuality education, including education on responsible sexual behaviour and prevention of early pregnancy;**

(e) **Raise the age of compulsory education to 16 years for girls and boys.**

Employment

36. The Committee notes that the guarantee of equal pay for equal work for women and men set out in article 28 of the Constitution is not in line with the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. It further notes the following with concern:

(a) The delay in the adoption of various legislative instruments that are necessary for accelerating women's equal participation in the labour market, including: (a) the draft law on sexual harassment in the workplace, which was formulated in the 2008–2011 period; (b) the draft law on maternity protection; and (c) the amendment to the Civil Servants' Act to repeal discriminatory provisions that reduce a woman's entitlement to annual leave due to pregnancy and childbirth and that allow for the possibility of terminating the labour contract of a female civil servant when she marries;

(b) The absence of legislation on the principle of equal pay for work of equal value in the State party, despite its ratification in 2016 of the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) of the International Labour Organization (ILO);

(c) Women's unequal access to economic opportunities, despite their higher participation and attainment rates at all levels of education, and the disproportionately high unemployment rate among women, in particular rural women, Maroon women and indigenous women;

(d) The continued occupational segregation in the labour market, the concentration of women in low-paying jobs in the informal sector and the underrepresentation of women in managerial positions and in non-traditional professions;

(e) The absence of regulation on the maximum number of working hours for girls between 14 and 17 years of age, which increases their vulnerability to exploitative working conditions and harassment or abuse by employers;

(f) The absence of reliable statistical data on the gender pay gap in both the private and public sectors.

37. **Recalling its previous recommendations (CEDAW/C/SUR/CO/3, para. 28), the Committee calls upon the State party:**

(a) **To adopt, without delay, the revised Civil Code, the draft law on maternity protection and the amendment to the Civil Servants' Act and to expand the coverage of the Minimum Hour Wage Act to the public sector and the informal economy;**

(b) **To identify and address the challenges delaying the adoption of the draft law on sexual harassment in the workplace and ensure that it is enforced in both the public and private sectors;**

(c) To amend article 28 of the Constitution to ensure that it incorporates the principle of equal pay for work of equal value and adopt measures to effectively enforce that principle;

(d) To conduct a study on occupational segregation in the labour market and the gender pay gap, including the collection and analysis of statistical data disaggregated by sex, with a view to addressing discriminatory gender stereotypes precluding women from exercising certain professions and to promoting non-discriminatory employment and recruitment practices in all sectors;

(e) To implement targeted measures to address occupational segregation and promote women's access to formal employment, including in managerial or decision-making positions and in non-traditional professions, such as construction, mining and logging, by guaranteeing paid maternity leave and providing sufficient and adequate childcare facilities;

(f) To promote equal sharing of family and domestic responsibilities between women and men, including by introducing compulsory paternity leave.

Health

38. The Committee welcomes the improved health insurance coverage for women in the State party, including for women with disabilities and women from disadvantaged groups. However, it remains concerned about the following:

(a) The inadequate funding of the health sector, resulting in women's very limited access to basic health-care services, in particular for rural women, Maroon women and indigenous women who must often travel to Paramaribo to seek specialist medical treatment;

(b) The lack of cardiovascular services and cancer screening for women outside Paramaribo, despite the high incidence of cardiovascular diseases and reproductive cancers, including breast, uterine and cervical cancer;

(c) The high incidence of unsafe abortion and the absence of measures to implement the Committee's previous recommendation to revise legislation criminalizing abortion (CEDAW/C/SUR/CO/3, para. 30);

(d) The lack of comprehensive education on sexual and reproductive health and rights and family planning services, as well as the persistently low rates of modern contraceptive use, in particular among rural women, Maroon women and indigenous women.

39. **Recalling its general recommendation No. 24 (1999) on women and health, the Committee draws attention to Sustainable Development Goals 3.1 and 3.7 and recommends that the State party:**

(a) Increase its health expenditure to improve the coverage of and access to high-quality health services for women living in the interior areas of the State party and ensure that they have access to cardiovascular health services and cancer screening;

(b) Conduct a study on the impact of unsafe abortions on maternal mortality and other obstetric complications;

(c) Amend articles 355–357 of the Penal Code, which prohibit abortion, with a view to legalizing it in cases of rape, incest, threats to the life and/or health

of the mother or severe foetal impairment, decriminalizing it in all other cases and removing punitive measures for women who undergo abortion;

(d) **Provide women with access to quality post-abortion care, especially in cases of complications resulting from unsafe abortions;**

(e) **Provide access to safe and affordable contraceptives, family planning services and adequate information on sexual and reproductive health.**

Economic and social life

40. The Committee commends the State party on its legislative reform establishing a national social security system and providing social benefits for women, including family allowances and conditional cash transfers. However, the Committee is concerned that the austerity measures taken by the State party, including budget cuts and the introduction of a fixed-rate value added tax in 2014, had a disproportionate impact on women living in poverty.

41. **The Committee recommends that the State party undertake an assessment on the impact of austerity measures on women, in particular disadvantaged groups of women, and ensure the internal redistribution of its national resources to overcome the consequences of budget cuts and ensure women's access to social benefits and microfinance and microcredit schemes at low interest rates.**

Disaster risk reduction and climate change

42. The Committee commends the State party for its commitment to addressing climate change through risk reduction strategies. However, it is concerned that the State party has not explicitly incorporated a gender perspective into those strategies. The Committee also regrets that the second national communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, submitted in 2016, failed to take into account the specific vulnerability of women to natural disasters and their ability as agents of change.

43. **Drawing attention to its general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, the Committee recommends that the State party ensure the effective participation of women, in particular rural women, Maroon women and indigenous women, in the formulation and implementation of policies and action plans on disaster risk reduction and climate change, not only because they are disproportionately affected by the effects of climate change and disasters but also as agents of change. It also recommends that such policies and plans, including the third national communication, explicitly include a gender perspective and take into account the specific needs of women.**

Rural women, Maroon women and indigenous women living in the interior

44. The Committee notes with appreciation the policy of the Ministry of Regional Development to empower and engage women in the planning of agricultural activities in the interior and welcomes the establishment of two directorates in 2016 to provide assistance to the Maroon and indigenous communities. However, it notes with concern the extremely high poverty rate among rural women, Maroon women and indigenous women in the State party and their very limited access to basic services, including health services, education, clean water, adequate sanitation, energy and communications technologies. It is also concerned about violations of the land rights of indigenous women and tribal women, despite three judgments of the

Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued in 2005, 2007 and 2015, holding that the State party violated the rights of indigenous people to land and access to justice. The Committee further regrets that rural women, Maroon women and indigenous women are excluded from decision-making processes, in particular with regard to the use of land.

45. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Develop and implement a policy to support the economic and social development of rural women, Maroon women and indigenous women and to overcome persistent gender inequalities limiting their access to land, social services, economic opportunities, sanitation facilities and communications technologies;**

(b) **Implement measures to ensure the full and equal participation of rural women, Maroon women and indigenous women in decision-making processes affecting them, including regarding mining and logging concessions and rural and national development plans, in line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women;**

(c) **Ratify the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) of ILO.**

Women with disabilities

46. The Committee is concerned about the lack of information on the situation of women and girls with disabilities in the State party and on the services available to them. It further regrets that there are no measures in place to improve access to and the accessibility of education, employment and health-care services for rural women, Maroon women and indigenous women and girls with disabilities.

47. **The Committee recommends that the State party take measures to collect and analyse information on the situation of women and girls with disabilities, paying particular attention to their access to education, employment and health care, and on the quality of the services available. It also calls upon the State party to implement measures to increase the accessibility of such services, in particular for rural women, Maroon women and indigenous women and girls with disabilities.**

Refugee and asylum-seeking women

48. The Committee notes that the State party experienced a sharp increase in the number of registered asylum seekers in 2016 and 2017 and is concerned about the lack of a national policy governing refugee protection or asylum procedures in the State party, as well as the lack of long-term protection measures for women refugees and asylum seekers who are victims of trafficking or gender-based violence. It is further concerned that women refugees and asylum seekers in the State party face difficulties in gaining access to education, health, employment, income-generating opportunities and financial services.

49. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Formulate and adopt a policy governing refugee protection and asylum procedures that ensures a gender-sensitive approach and protects the economic and social rights of refugee and women and girl asylum-seekers;**

(b) **Put in place gender-appropriate, culturally sensitive and age sensitive individual screening and assessment procedures to ensure the systematic and early identification of refugees and asylum seekers, in particular women and girls who have been victims of or who are at risk of gender based violence.**

Lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and intersex persons

50. The Committee notes that the Penal Code has been revised, inter alia, to include the protection of lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and intersex persons and to prohibit discrimination and hate speech against them. However, it is concerned that lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and intersex persons continue to face discrimination and harassment, in particular with regard to their rights to education, employment and health.

51. **The Committee recommends that the State party ensure equal rights and opportunities for lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and intersex persons, and raise awareness in order to eliminate discrimination and social stigma against them. It further recommends that the State party apply a policy of zero tolerance of discrimination and violence against lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and intersex persons, including by prosecuting and adequately punishing perpetrators.**

Marriage and family relations

52. The Committee welcomes the fact that article 35 of the Constitution recognizes the equality of husband and wife before the law and the extraordinary value of motherhood, and provides for the protection of children without discrimination. Nonetheless, the Committee is concerned that, in practice, women do not have equal rights within marriage. In particular, it is concerned about the following:

(a) The delay, since 2011, in revising the Civil Code to remove provisions that establish the father as the only parent having guardianship over children, require children to take the name of their father and define the legal incapacity of married women;

(b) The minimum age of marriage, which is 15 years for girls, the disproportionately high number of rural women, Maroon women and indigenous women 15 to 17 years of age who are married and the absence of a national strategy to combat and prevent child marriage;

(c) The absence of a legal framework for tribal marriages;

(d) The fact that women in de facto unions cannot inherit property from a deceased partner or claim pension benefits.

53. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt the revised Civil Code to remove discriminatory provisions including articles 18, 24, 56 (a), 217, 221, 234 and 353, raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 years and guarantee the legal capacity and equal rights of married women, as well as the equality of women and men with regard to parental authority and custody of children;**

(b) **Take measures to prevent early and child marriages, including by developing a national strategy for the prevention and elimination of child marriage and establishing a complaints mechanism for victims of child and/or forced marriage;**

(c) Provide legal protection of the rights of women in tribal marriages and conduct targeted awareness-raising activities about their rights under the Convention and the corresponding remedies;

(d) Consider extending social and economic protection to women in de facto unions.

Data collection and analysis

54. The Committee welcomes the efforts made by the State party to strengthen data collection systems, including through the piloting of the Caribbean Community gender equality indicators model, in order to collect data on the participation of women in public life, produce a national report on the status of women and men in the State party and create a database for monitoring. Nonetheless, the Committee reiterates its previous concerns regarding the overall absence of publicly and regularly available data, disaggregated by sex, age and location (rural, interior and urban) (CEDAW/C/SUR/CO/3, para. 13), which are necessary to assess the impact and effectiveness of policies in all areas of the Convention, in particular regarding health insurance coverage, social benefits, access to land, economic empowerment, vocational training, sports and recreation.

55. **The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen the collection, analysis and publication of comprehensive data, disaggregated by sex, age and location, and prioritize the creation of a national database that uses measurable indicators to assess trends in the situation of women and progress made towards the realization of substantive equality between women and men in all areas covered by the Convention. In that regard, the Committee draws the State party's attention to its general recommendation No. 9 (1989) on statistical data concerning the situation of women and encourages the State party to continue its collaboration with relevant United Nations agencies in the systematic collection of accurate data.**

Optional Protocol to the Convention and amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention

56. **The Committee encourages the State party to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention and to accept, as soon as possible, the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.**

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

57. **The Committee calls upon the State party to use the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in its efforts to implement the provisions of the Convention.**

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

58. **The Committee calls for the realization of substantive gender equality, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, throughout the process of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**

Dissemination

59. **The Committee requests the State party to ensure the timely dissemination of the present concluding observations, in the official languages of the State party, to the relevant State institutions at all levels (national, regional, local), in**

particular to the Government, the ministries, the National Assembly and the judiciary, to enable their full implementation.

Technical assistance

60. The Committee recommends that the State party link the implementation of the Convention to its development efforts and that it avail itself of regional or international technical assistance in that respect.

Ratification of other treaties

61. The Committee notes that the adherence of the State party to the nine major international human rights instruments[1] would enhance the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of life. The Committee therefore encourages the State party to ratify the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, to which it is not yet a party.

Follow-up to the concluding observations

62. The Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 11 (c), 11 (d), 15 (a) and 15 (b) above.

Preparation of the next report

63. The Committee requests the State party to submit its seventh periodic report in March 2022. The report should be submitted on time and, in case of delay, cover the entire period up to the time of its submission.

64. The Committee requests the State party to follow the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents (see HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6, chap. I).

[1] The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.